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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 001467

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL UNSC ZI SF

SUBJECT: PAHAD OUTLINES SAG CONCERNS ABOUT UNSC ZIMBABWE RESOLUTION

REF: A. STATE 70882
 1B. BROWN-GOLDENBERG EMAIL OF 7/2/08
 1C. PRETORIA 1462

Classified By: Ambassador Eric M. Bost. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) At his July 4 public press conference, DepForMin Aziz Pahad expressed opposition to the USG-proposed UNSC resolution on Zimbabwe (refs A & B) and outlined current South African Government (SAG) thinking on Zimbabwe policy. Repeating familiar SAG arguments, Pahad:

-- claimed that the "hasty" UNSC resolution will not/not assist the South African-led mediation in Zimbabwe, and in fact could "jeopardize" the South African efforts at this "very, very decisive moment;"

-- urged support for the African Union-passed resolution on Zimbabwe, which called for a Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe ("allow Africans to solve Africa's problems");

-- dismissed recognition of Mugabe as the legitimate President of Zimbabwe as an "academic discussion," noting that the inauguration had taken place and that the international community should not "be diverted on discussion of legitimacy or not;"

-- called on MDC leader Tsvangirai to engage the South African facilitation and stop "wasting time," observing that the MDC had "committed themselves to some form of a unity structure" prior to the run-off elections;

-- suggested that Zimbabweans should not be bogged down in "terminology" between a government of national unity, transitional government, government of national reconciliation, or other names;

-- called for the end of violence to create a "conducive climate" for negotiations, although said any complaints about violence should be made through the facilitation and said, "It is no use harping on something (violence) that has been going on for so long;" and

-- dismissed the proposed imposition of "smart sanctions" as ineffective, noting that sanctions have been in place for some time and the economy is already in a state of crisis.

12. (C) COMMENT: Pahad's comments reflect core SAG thinking on the proposed UNSC resolution and, on nearly every key point, run counter to USG objectives at the UNSC. South Africa will strongly resist passage of a UNSC resolution on Zimbabwe, and continued Western lobbying is unlikely to shift the South African leadership. In addition to the opposition to UNSC "meddling" in Zimbabwe at this "sensitive" time, the SAG objects to most of the key elements of the resolution,

including: its Chapter VII status; the imposition of the arms embargo and smart sanctions (viewing both as ineffective and undermining prospects for dialogue); and the recognition of the March 29 elections as "reflecting the will of the Zimbabwean people." Not only will the SAG oppose the resolution, we believe they will actively lobby China, Russia, and other non-permanent UNSC members at the highest level.

¶3. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The SAG's position on Zimbabwe reflects President Mbeki's general foreign policy outlook that only dialogue, not pressure, can solve Africa's conflicts -- this despite the ANC's own history of outside support (and international sanctions) during the anti-apartheid struggle. Mbeki is convinced that Western involvement in Zimbabwe, including the UNSC resolution, will only undermine his long-sought-after goal of a government of national unity, which he views as the only solution to Zimbabwe's crisis. The fact that Mugabe has continually QZimbabwe's crisis. The fact that Mugabe has continually promised such a compromise for nearly a decade -- outplaying Mbeki at every turn -- appears to do little to undermine Mbeki's faith in continued dialogue.

¶4. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: South Africa also believes strongly that Africans should solve African problems. The international community should only become involved when requested by the AU or other African leaders. Mbeki views outside engagement in Zimbabwe, particularly the perceived defense of white farming interests, as racist and counter to his own efforts. Mbeki likely believes that he could have achieved a political solution in Zimbabwe by now, but for

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Western "meddling."
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